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THE EXPRESSION OF INDEFINITENESS CATEGORY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE OF XIV-XVII CENTURIES

The modern stage of linguistic development is marked by the increased interest towards the problem of indefiniteness category and its place in the English language. It is directly related to the person's mental outlook, when items of the environment are regarded as identified, definite or unknown, indefinite. The category became the topic matter of numerous foreign [3; 4] and Ukrainian [1; 2] research. The functioning of the category in a sentence requires special attention.

The investigation is based on the works of Early Modern English author W. Shakespeare and Middle English poet J. Chaucer. The formal marker of indefiniteness category in Middle English as well as in Early New English is the indefinite article. In Early New English there is a tendency for the indefinite article to mark new information, shoving focusing properties. In the majority of cases (for instance, 82,6% in "Midsummer Night's Dream", 77% in "Comedy of Errors") sentences with direct word order contain article with focusing properties. In sentences with indirect word order there's a higher possibility of the article to mark old information, as in the example (1):

(1) *"What answer, sir? when spake I such a word?"*

The sentence (1) has indirect word order by the structure VSO and the indefinite article marks contextually old information, presenting the topic of the sentence – "a word". On the contrary, in Middle English the indefinite article marks contextually new information almost in all cases, there is a slight possibility of it to present focus of the sentence both in the sentence with direct and indirect word order.

In addition to formal marking there are other ways of distinguishing the category in English. Contextually, the category can be expressed by different parts of speech. For instance, nominal phrases like "minority", "some", "somebody", etc. In Early Modern English there is a higher possibility of nominal units to mark topic of the sentence if compared to Middle English; though pronoun "some" identifies topic in the sentences with direct word order in 44% of cases in Middle English. Other means of expressing indefiniteness category, registered both in Middle and Early New English are: adjective ("endless"), adverb ("a little").

To sum up, in comparison to Middle English sentences, Early New English shows is a higher possibility for means of indefiniteness category to mark sentence topic, especially in sentences with indirect word order. There is a tendency for all the means of indefiniteness category (nominal units, indefinite article, some adverbs, attributes) to mark contextually new information, presenting focus of the sentence.

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